Dear Jim, "Assassination Tapes" - O'Toole/Penthouse 3/10/75

How the appearance went on Panorama and our previous experiences indicate it might be wise to keep an eye on how the promotion for this book goes. There is more than enough gimickry involved to make it more than acceptable for the entertainment orientation of modern electronic "news" treatment.

You will remember we had certain impressions of Ceposs and his attitude and intentions toward us and our work. These included his getting control, delaying and "editing" with virtually no cash cost to them-less than the cost of setting type - and other conditions that were designed to rob us if not to turn us off. Either way he had the book for nothing and controlled it or went through the motions of wanting it while doing everything possible to get us to turn him down.

Because of what we don't know and have no way of knowing this can be important/ O'Toole's approach builds in certain limitations. For example, he can't have the CIA, FBI, Secret Service people on tape. I haven't seen the book, but I can't imagine this approach yielding more than that the Dallas cops and Warren were liars. This means a return to the Epstein focus of dumping it all on the nobodies and Warren with perhaps another Commissioner of two and Rankin and perhaps another staffer or two. In this connection I'm curious to see if he has Russell, who is available on tape.

In short, if this book is successful it will fortify the existing national belief that Oswald was not really the lone assassin if one at all and will direct attention away from all theplces attention is needed. Should O'Toole be questioned about this in appearances he has a simple answer, he was limited by the tapes that are available.

At this juncture could anything make the federal agencies happier?

Inherent in this is a campaign to get acceptability for this new device of the police state. Why else would the Dektor people take their time to assist in O'Toole's promotion, as they did today?

There is a limit to how much watching I'll be able to do. The repair work on the living-room floor is to begin in the morning.

There was mention on NBC and CBS TV evening news, with a commentary

by Severeid about which I've written him.

3/11 Caught part of O'Toole's appearance on Today. It had more of the promotion for the gadget, another Dektor man and the president of the society of stress analysts, as they call themselves.

What O'Toole said is consistent with what you noted as absent from his book, the source of my quoted work. He says that what he has done is prove what "people like Mark Lane and Sylvia Meagher have been saying for years." Well, there is only one who has been writing and researching and "saying" for years and it is neither Lane nor Sylvia and there is no doubt that O'Toole knows this. This raise the question why he has to lie? What purpose can he have. Or to put it another way, whose interests does it serve? Unless he has some compulsion it can't even serve his own interest.

When Lane and Meagher have been silent for years?

He was careful not to mention Bud or CIA, either.

Not inconsistent with what I'm suggesting is his explanations of who could have or had interest in framing Oswald. He answered this with a question, who could have had interest in framing a Communist, a defecter to Russia. Everyone byt the spooks' oil interests, the radical right, etc. This, of course, is the spook formula, Farewell America included. And note than he can't have done any work without knowing Oswald was not Communist.

1st add, O'Toole

I missed 'ovich's intro on yesterday's Panorama show because I had a bad cassettte in the machine. The intro preceeded the appearance by two starlets and half the entire show so I got O'Toole in full on tape.

Povich, certainly not on his own, went far out of his way to make little of O'Toole's CIA past. He said he was merely a technician, not an agent, who merely did electronic work. Well, this is the worst of the dirty work not the most innocent. I don't know ah at O'Toole did but the electronics people went all around planting bugs and taps.

Yet Povich, not realizing that thisis what the CIA calls its "agents," said he was not an agent, merely an "employee." I can't imagine it as his inttiative. It is more like the O'Toole request, based on an alleged want not to be considered a spy or an assassin, merely a worker with machinery.

Undoubtedly Today's appearance was shorter than Panorama's. On Panorama when O'Toole got into his claims for evidence except for a few utterly irrelevancies, like the lie-detector operator himself lied, he had nothing that is not in the first Whitewash, or nothing not ten y years old, and nothing not already proven beyond doubt by solid evidence, not gadgetry. And interpretations of gadgetry.

If you don't know how meaningless the Lewis lie is, then the FBI reports that have always been available are explicit in saying that Frazier passed the lie-detector test.

There is another aspect of this that is provocative. Whose present interest is served by a new campaign whose focus is Oswald's innocence? A camppign that can't point to guilt, can't show who framedthe whole case?

When the spooks are under attack and when there is a case for Oswald having been one this becomes a self-answering question.

Particularly with the book so long delayed. Ceposs told us it was completed almost a year ago. The natural market then would have been pre=Xmas. Why was it delayed? Nobody could figure the current interest in the CIA and FBI that long ago. At that time, also, there was great interest in official corruption coming from Watergate. Why not rush the book if necessary to exploit that?

And in this do we have an explanation for Ceposs' refusal to return the copy of our book? Why did he need it? Why did he not return it especially when we asked for it?

The obvious suggestion fits with O'Toole's not mentioning anything about it or how the transcript came to be available when he knew and certainly Ceposs knew. I believe it is not impossible that changes were made to work around the content of WW IV on Oswald as an agent.

I'll now want to read the book with care.

If there is an old ms kicking around that would be interesting. Or disagreements with his magazine writing.

The apparently narrow focus whose immediate result is to help the spooks and exculpate them and to promote this police-state device is much too provocative to ignore.

However, you should also understand that the timing in books involves months. The release date, at least in general, undoubtedly was determined by last Xmas.

To look at this from the other side, however, whether or not it is relevant, the release date also was decided about when WWIV appeared, about when the Hersh series began. I have no way of knowing if there is any connection.

The media will go for this gimickry. The formula is safe for it. He'll get lots of attention, as was predictable with his formula, as Epstein did. The question is cui bono?